

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PM-05

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1972

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS BELFAST 162

TAGS: ASEC, PORS, UK, EI

SUBJECT: BRITISH SOLDIER FIRES AT CONSULATE GENERAL

1. AT APPROXIMATELY 1500 HOURS LOCAL TIME ON SATURDAY AUGUST 18 A BRITISH SOLDIER STATIONED WITH THE 39TH BRIGADE NORTHERN IRELAND FIRED THIRTEEN SHOTS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR AND LOBBY OF THE OFFICE BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN DOWNTOWN BELFAST. MOMENTS BEFORE THE SHOOTING I HAD EXITED THE BUILDING AND WAS ACROSS THE STREET IN A BOOK STORE WHEN THE SHOTS RANG OUT. PEOPLE IN THE BUSY STREET AND CROWDED BOOK STORE IMMEDIATELY SCURRIED FOR COVER.

2. THE POLICE CONSTABLE GUARDING THE POLICE STATION OPPOSITE THE CONGEN WAS AN EYE WITNESS TO THE SHOOTING. THE CONSTABLE TOLD ME A BRITISH SOLDIER WALKED UP TO HIM AND SAID IN EFFECT "I THINK I'LL SHOOT UP THE AMERICAN CONSULATE", THE SOLDIER RAISED HIS RIFLE AND FIRED ACROSS THE STREET THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR OF OUR BUILDING. AFTER FIRING HIS WEAPON HE HANDED IT OVER TO THE POLICE AND WAS IMMEDIATELY TAKEN INTO CUSTODY. AT LAST REPORT THE SOLDIER WAS UNDERGOING MEDICAL OBSERVATION.

3. THE BULLETS PENETRATED THE GLASS DOOR AND PUNCTURED A RADIATOR WITH CONNECTING WATER PIPES WHICH CAUSED THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE BUILDING TO SUFFER SEVERE FLOODING. ASIDE FROM UNCLASSIFIED

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THE BROKEN GLASS IN THE BUILDING'S FRONT DOOR AND A FLOODED LOBBY THE OFFICES OF THE CONGEN HAVE NOT BEEN DAMAGED. THE BUILDING WAS WITHOUT WATER AND ELECTRICITY OVER THE WEEKEND.

4. NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED APOLOGIES OVER THE INCIDENT AND HAVE TOLD ME THAT THIS SOLDIER'S ABERRANT BEHAVIOUR SHOULD NOT BE PERCEIVED AS AN INDICATOR OF ANTI-

AMERICAN FEELING ON THE PART OF THE BRITISH FORCES. THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE 39TH BRIGADE IN EXPRESSING HIS APOLOGIES TOLD ME THAT THE SOLDIER INVOLVED HAD NOT BEEN WELL FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS.

5. THE POLICE SPECULATE THAT THE SOLDIER BY HIS ACTION WAS PROBABLY SEEKING A QUICK DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMY. I HAVE ASKED THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE TO PROVIDE A WRITTEN REPORT ON THE MATTER WHEN INVESTIGATIONS ARE COMPLETED.MURRAY

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